

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for handling the redemption, clearing and settlement of a large number of individually targeted offers comprising the steps of:

compiling a database of electronic offers;

allowing access to said database by at least one point of sale system;

providing said at least one point of sale system with a redemption engine for validating at least one offer to be made to a consumer while a sales transaction is being processed by the at least one point of sale system;

identifying a consumer and a sales transaction event involving said consumer;

using said redemption engine to determine whether electronically stored conditions of any offer available to said consumer and stored on said database have been satisfied; and

providing a reward to said consumer at said at least one point of sale system if said redemption engine determines that said electronically stored conditions of any offer have been satisfied.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said compiling step comprises receiving an electronic data file containing information about at least one offer from an entity.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein said receiving step comprises receiving an electronic data file from a product manufacturer.

4. A method according to claim 2, wherein said receiving step comprises receiving an electronic data file from a retailer.

5. A method according to claim 2, wherein said receiving step comprises receiving an electronic data file from a distributor of offers.

6. A method according to claim 2, wherein said electronic data file receiving step comprises receiving in electronic

form information about at least one offer available to a number of targeted individuals.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein said receiving step comprises receiving for each said offer at least one of information about a targeted consumer, information about a product to be discounted, offer conditions, identification of a reward, an identity of a retailer, at least one retail location to which said offer may be transmitted, an expiration date, and a limit on number of uses of the offer.

8. A method according to claim 1, wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer via a specific consumer identifier.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer via a frequent shopper number.

10. A method according to claim 1, wherein said redemption engine providing step comprises providing said redemption engine on a controller associated with said at least one retail point of sale system.

11. A method according to claim 1, further comprising rechecking validation of a redeemed offer at a central system remote from said at least one retail point of sale system.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein said rechecking step comprises performing said rechecking step at a non-retail store location.

13. A method according to claim 11, wherein said rechecking step comprises:

retrieving a log from said at least one point of sale system which contains a record of each redeemed offer and each sale transaction involving each said redeemed offer and identification of each consumer redeeming each said redeemed offer;

transmitting said log to a processor at said central system; and

verifying that said electronically stored conditions for each said redeemed offer were met and that each said

reward was appropriately issued using said processor at said central system.

14. A method according to claim 11, further comprising providing a reimbursement value for each redeemed offer to a creator of each said redeemed offer after said rechecking step has shown that each said redeemed offer has been properly redeemed.

15. A method according to claim 1, further comprising activating at least one offer stored on said electronic database by having said consumer first click on said at least one offer on a website.

16. A method for processing targeted incentive offers comprising the steps of:

electronically entering information about at least one targeted offer into a central database;

placing the database into communication with a point-of-sale system at another location;

transferring data about each redeemed offer from the point-of-sale system for validation;

validating each said redeemed offer;

electronically determining from the data an amount of money to be received by a seller from at least one offer source;

providing a report of monies to be received to the seller; and

providing a statement of monies to be paid to the seller to each offer source.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein said entering step further comprises entering into said database at least one of a product and a product category for which each said offer may be used, and entering data defining a value for each said offer into said database.

18. A method according to claim 16, further comprising:

maintaining a local offer database at said another location; and

said communication placing step comprising providing information about at least one available targeted offer to said local offer database.

19. A method according to claim 18, wherein said data transferring step comprises periodically transferring redeemed offer data from said local offer database to said central database.

20. A method according to claim 18, further comprising:

converting information on paper coupons submitted for redemption to an electronic file;

transferring said electronic file representative of said converted information to said local offer database;

periodically transmitting said electronic file to said central database; and

determining from said transmitted electronic file and said information in said central database whether said converted paper coupons have been properly redeemed.

21. A method according to claim 16, wherein said entering step comprises entering targeted offers from multiple offer sources.

22. A method according to claim 16, wherein said validating step comprises comparing data about each transaction involving each said redeemed offer with redemption conditions stored in said central database to insure that said redemption conditions have been met.

23. A method according to claim 16, further comprising auditing at least some transactions relating to redeemed offers.

24. A method according to claim 16, further comprising:

logging and time stamping offers being redeemed; and

transmitting information about said logged and time stamped offers to said central database.



25. A method according to claim 16, further comprising:

logging overrides performed by personnel at each POS terminal in said point of sale system; and

transmitting information about said logged overrides to said central database.

26. A method according to claim 16, further comprising analyzing said transmitted redeemed offer data for questionable rates of invalid coupon redemptions.

27. A system for handling the redemption, clearing and settlement of a large number of individually targeted offers comprises:

a database of electronic offers;

means for allowing access to the database by at least one point of sale system;

said at least one point of sale system being provided with a redemption engine for validating at least one offer

to be made to a consumer while a sales transaction is being processed by the at least one point of sale system;

means for identifying a consumer and a sales transaction event involving said consumer;

said redemption engine determining whether electronically stored conditions of any offer available to the consumer and stored on the database have been satisfied; and

means for providing a reward to the consumer at the at least one point of sale system if the redemption engine determines that said electronically stored conditions of the offer have been satisfied.

28. A system according to claim 27, further comprising means for inputting an electronic data file contain information about at least one targeted offer from at least one entity.

29. A system according to claim 27, wherein said consumer identifying means comprises means for identifying said consumer via a specific consumer identifier.

30. A system according to claim 27, wherein said consumer identifying means comprises means for identifying said consumer via a frequent shopper number.

31. A system according to claim 27, wherein said redemption engine is resident on a controller associated with the at least one point of sale system.

32. A system according to claim 27, further comprising means for rechecking validation of a redeemed offer at a central system remote from the at least one point of sale system.

33. A system according to claim 32, wherein said rechecking means comprises means for retrieving a log from the at least one point of sale system which contains a record of each redeemed offer and each sale transaction involving each said redeemed offer and identification information about each consumer redeemed each said redeemed offer, and means for verifying that electronically stored conditions for each said redeemed offer have been met and that each said reward was appropriately issued.

34. A system according to claim 27, further comprising means for activating at least one offer stored on the database by having said consumer first click on the at least one offer on a website.

35. A system for handling the redemption, clearing, and settlement of a large number of individually targeted offers comprises:

a central database having information about at least one targeted offer;

means for placing the database in communication with a point-of-sale system at another location;

means for transferring data about each redeemed targeted offer from the point-of-sale system for validation;

means for validating each redeemed targeted offer;

means for electronically determining from the data an amount of money to be received by a seller from at least one offer source;

means for providing a report of monies to be received to the seller; and

means for providing a statement of monies to be paid to the seller to each offer source.

36. A system according to claim 35, further comprising:

said point-of-sale system having at least one point of sale terminal;

each said point-of-sale terminal having a scanner for scanning redeemed paper coupons; and

a local offer database connected to each said terminal for receiving and storing information from each said terminal about said scanned coupons.

37. A system according to claim 35, further comprising means for auditing at least some transactions relating to redeemed offers.